

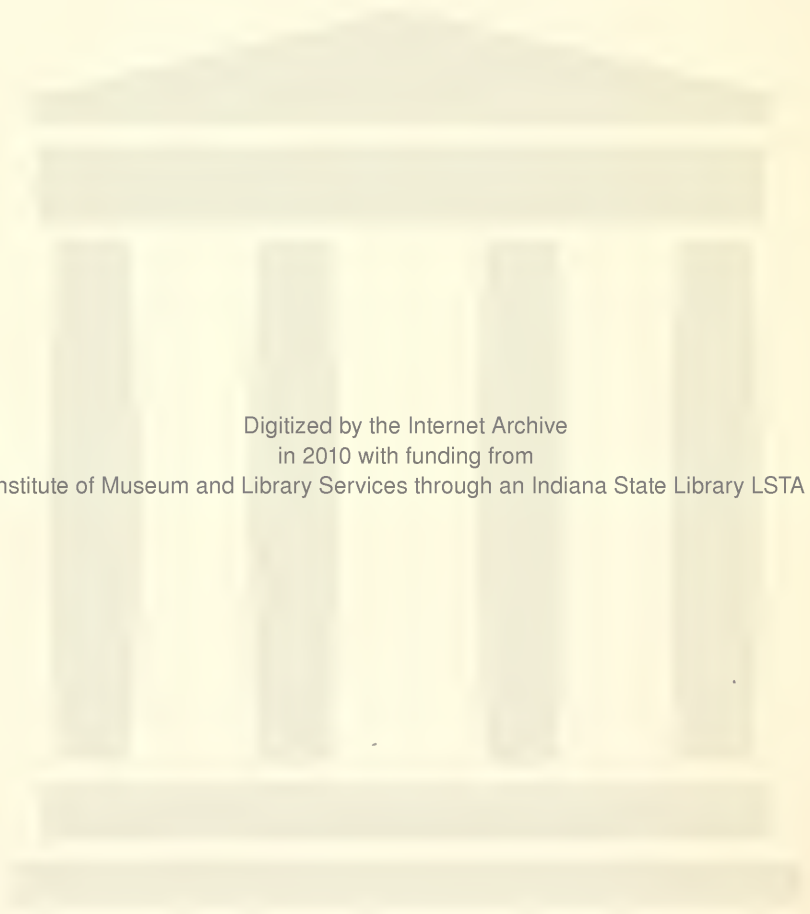
Lincoln
At the ROTARY CLUB
Springfield, Illinois
February 13, 1922

LINCOLN

An Address by ROTARIAN EUCLID B. ROGERS

At the dinner of the Rotary Club of Springfield, Illinois, on the evening of Monday, February 13, 1922. President Roy Cogswell said: "This is a legal holiday in memory of the birth of Abraham Lincoln and I think it well for us to recognize the fact, and so I ask Rotarian Euclid B. Rogers to say a word."

The appropriate response of Dr. Rogers is presented on the following pages:



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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

"A house of logs, low, windowless and small,
Fireplace of stones and clay;
Stick-chimney queer, one southward-open door
For light and cheer of day.

A slender woman, young, in homespun garb,
A man-child bending o'er,
Within a lowly cradle gently rocked
Upon the earthen floor.

A cradle rude, God's basket, like the ark
That lay among the reeds
Upon the Nile, filled with a nation's hope
And promise of great deeds."

So his birth, Feb. 12, 1809.

I shall not rehearse the familiar story of his life. Was he a man of patience and of poise? I appeal to the history of the early 60's: The President whom he succeeded had surrendered to the slave holders of the South the arsenals of the Republic, the skeletons of her army, her fleets, practically all her resources. Anarchy, discord, treason everywhere. Hundreds of journals launching daily insult and outrage upon him: ridiculing his plans, taxing him with feebleness and imbecility, and exalting the talents and resources of the insurrectionists. And what were foreign nations doing? France, renouncing the glorious memories of the 18th century, was holding out her imperial hand to the South, and by creating the Mexican Empire, was conspiring to overthrow the Republic. England held herself aloof, an impassive and cynical spectator of what she believed to be the inevitable destruction of the Union. And there stood Lincoln breasting the full tide of oceanic hate. To insult, threat, menace, provocation, hate and treason, he responded by perfect calm and serenity, possessing his great soul in patience, and that's man's highest victory.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief was Lincoln, and yet none loved laughter more than he, and few have left a nobler legacy of clean wit over which men may laugh both well

and wisely. And there was a high and holy purpose in all his humor. He was simple, gentle, sympathetic, with healing in the touch of his hands, and yet he had a deep appreciation of the comical and ludicrous, and they played shadow-games in the chambers of his life, and these shadow-folk took from him many a pain, and spread for him many a festival, and spoke to him of the morrow that would surely be.

Religious, was he that? Yes. True, he surrounded his own secret life with a reserve hard to penetrate, and no man could criticise that reserve, because in all his public work he poured out his very soul in utter abandon, but he guarded his inner spiritual life from all intrusion, treating it as Lyman Abbott said of Phillips Brooks, "as a Holy of Holies." The heart of him leaned up ag'st the Mighty God of his heart, and the hand of him felt for the leading hand of the All-Father, and the soul of him trusted and adored. Forgetting himself, effacing all tho't of self, he gained possession of his great personality by losing it. The problem of the religious life? Here you have it: To develop personality to the highest point, to forget it, and finally to regain it by identifying it with great causes, noble forces and commanding convictions, and that was Lincoln.

In this connection I cite you the fighting editor of the New York Evening Post, author, diplomat, in the thick of affairs, that human fountain of sanely directed energy, that lover of truth, a seeker for the Heavenly Wisdom more than for hidden treasure, Mr. John Bigelow. Said he: "The greatness of Lincoln must be sought for in the constituents of his moral nature. The issues presented to the people at the Presidential election in 1860 were, to a larger extent, moral questions, humanly speaking, than were those presented at any other Presidential election. Looking back upon the Administration, and upon all the blunders which from a worldly point of view Lincoln and his advisers seemed to have made, and then pausing to consider the results of that Administration, we realize that we had what, above all things we most needed, a President who walked by faith, and not by sight; who did not rely upon his own compass, but followed a cloud by day and a fire by night, which he had learned to trust implicitly."

And how tall and stately his form and fame! The men who would not defile their lips with his name, men who would have slain him, have taught their children the pathway to his tomb.

Lincoln: warm, golden letters that will never lose their luster till the heart stands still.

Washington—Lincoln. How fortunate we to have two such national heroes! No nation on earth has two such. Our history runs through fewer pages than any other. The splendors of antiquity are not ours, but if two short centuries have given us two such monumental ideals, what shall a millenium of steady, stately progress bestow! Happy our successors who walk thro the corridors of our Hall of Fame in that great day that is yet to be!

As Percy MacKaye recently sang:

“Empire is ours—but not of tribes
Eating our culture at command;
Gospel is ours—but not for Scribes
And Pharisees to sell and brand.

Splendor is ours—the priceless dome
Of the Eternal City—ours;
The Eternal City is not Rome,
No, nor Manhattan’s Babel towers.

But where Mt. Vernon shadows fall
Glimmers its silent Parthenon,
And on its cabined Capitol
A wood-thrush sings by the Sangamon.”

As in this city 80 years ago Lincoln said of Washington, so say I of both Washington and Lincoln: “In solemn awe pronounce the names and in their naked, deathless splendor leave them shining on.”

Upon motion of Rotarian Hal Smith, the Club voted to have the short address printed.



